

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 140 (2014) 535 – 541

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

PSYSOC 2013

Personality and Values of Pre-Independence and Post-Independence Malaysians

Rohany Nasir ^{a*}, Zainah Ahmad Zamani ^b, Wan Shahrazad Wan Sulaiman ^c
Rozainee Khairudin ^d, Fatimah wati Halim ^e

^{ab} School of Psychology & Human Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract

After Malaya achieved its independence in 1957 and after the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the country went through a lot of changes politically, socially and economically. The country had developed leaps and bounds physically especially in terms of its infrastructure and there were also changes in its people in so many aspects especially educational and economic levels. From a country that was little known in other parts of the world, it is now known practically all over the world, although Malaysia is a relatively small country. With all those changes and developments in the country one could expect some psychological and social changes amongst its people. Thus, this study aimed to identify the differences in personality and values both terminal and instrumental of pre-independence and post-independence Malaysians. A total of 552 respondents participated in this study comprising of 261 born before 1957 and 291 born after 1957. NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) was used to measure personality and Rokeach Value Survey was employed to measure terminal and instrumental values. Results showed that there were significant differences in certain constructs of personality and certain aspects of terminal and instrumental values of the two groups of Malaysians.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of PSYSOC 2013.

Keywords: Personality, values, Malaysia, pre-independence, post-independence.

1. Introduction

After its independence in 1957 and the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the country experienced big changes politically, socially and economically. The country had developed leaps and bounds in terms of its infrastructure as

*Corresponding Author: Rohany Nasir. Tel.: +60122281871; fax: +60389213541
E-mail address: rohanyn@gmail.com

well as in the people's educational and economic levels. Consequently this has influenced social transformation of the people in many aspects. This social transformation has given shape to individuals' form of life and has differentiated their perceptions related to value or value systems (Mourn, 1981) and personality.

Rokeach (1973) defined value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. Values influence the way events and situations are construed and they are not only cognitions but are linked to emotions. They have some stability, but the importance of particular values may change with life experiences and with the emergence of new roles and responsibilities, especially during youth (Rokeach, 1973; Cileli & Tezer, 1998). The concept of values can be defined as one's general beliefs about desirable and undesirable behavior and goals or end states. Values are a type of social cognition that functions to facilitate adaptation to one's environment (Kahle, 1983).

Values are guidelines which tell us how a person has decided to use his life (Rath, Harmin and Simon, 1966). Also values a person has grew out of his personal experience. Thus values represent an important link between the social environment and the individual's psychological being. Terminal values are values that are longed to be achieved and it contained the objective which may be either individual oriented or society oriented. Terminal values are also personal beliefs concerning desirable end states of existence and great goals in life. Individual oriented terminal values are forgiving, freedom of thought while the society oriented values are world peace and brotherhood. Instrumental values are instruments to obtain higher goals.

The big five domains of personality include, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, neuroticism and extraversion. A conscientious person is someone who has the traits of orderliness and self-discipline among others; an agreeableness person is likely easy to accept, good-natured and relates to people with respect and honor; a person who is open to experience is open to aesthetics and ideas; an extraversion person is assertive and active while a person who has a high score for neuroticism is likely to be anxious and depressed (Soto, Gosling, John & Potter, 2011)

A study by Czerwon, Luttke and Werheid (2011) found that age had significant relations with Big Fives scores: with increasing age the subjects had lower scores in neuroticism, extraversion and openness. Openness was found to decline with age. Research indicates that from emerging adulthood through middle age, conscientiousness and agreeableness show positive trends, while neuroticism demonstrates a negative trend, and extraversion and openness to experience show flat trend in both men and women (Lehmann, Denissen, Allemand & Penke, 2013). Roughly speaking extraversion, openness and neuroticism generally decline and agreeableness and conscientiousness increase during most of the adult life span (Chan et al 2012; Roberts & Mroczek, 2008). Chan et al (2012) also found that extraversion and openness are lowest among the old while conscientiousness was highest in adulthood and lowest during adolescence.

Personality traits continue to change even in old age. Research had shown that personality traits differ with age (Lucas & Donnellan, 2009; Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006). People retain the capacity to change at all ages (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008). The direction of change is in the positive direction. As they age people become more confident, warm, responsible, and calm or in other words socially mature (Roberts & Wood, 2006). Social maturity is equated with the capacity to become a productive and involved contributor to society (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008).

This study aimed to identify the differences in personality and values both terminal and instrumental of pre-independence and post-independence Malaysians.

2. Materials and Method

This study employed a survey method. A total of 552 adult respondents of Malay ethnic participated in this study with 261 respondents born before 1957 categorized as pre-independence and another 291 born after 1957 were categorized as post-independence generation. Two instruments were used and they are: (1) A modified Rokeach Value Survey which measured two types of values: terminal values and instrumental values. Each value consisted 10 items which were rated according to rank order from the most important to the least important, (2) NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) which measured personality. This adapted NEO Personality Inventory measured five dimensions of personality: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The NEO-FFI contains 60 items on a Likert scale with five response options strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Each personality domain contains 12 items and the range of scores for each

domain is 12-60. Both instruments were back translated to the Malay language.

3. Results and Discussion

Results in Table1 show terminal values of pre-independence and post-independence groups. Out of a total of 10 values only three were significantly different between the pre-independence and post-independence generations, and they are equality $t=3.66$, $p < 0.05$; inner harmony $t=2.61$, $p < 0.05$ and salvation $t=2.36$, $p < 0.05$. For all the three values the older generation scored significantly higher than the younger generation. However, there was no difference in the rest of the values: a world of peace, freedom, happiness, national security, health, self-respect, social recognition between the two generations.

The older generation had gone through a lot of hardships during their younger days. They have seen and experienced the struggles for independence, the oppression during the Japanese occupation and so many other hardships during the pre-independence days in the country. They have also witnessed and heard of hardships in other parts of the world due to slavery, social and economic inequalities that had caused a lot of sufferings. Their experiences and observations have shaped their values (Rokeach, 1973; Cileli & Tezer, 1998). As such, it is no wonder that the older generation favored and appreciated equality, inner harmony and salvation more than the younger generation who had never experienced hardships and struggles.

Table 1: T- test results of differences in terminal values between pre-independence and post-independence Malays

	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Equality	Pre-independence	261	8.23	1.57	530.93	3.66*
	Post-independence	291	7.65	2.12		
Freedom	Pre-independence	261	8.25	1.61	548.29	1.37
	Post-independence	291	8.04	1.90		
Happiness	Pre-independence	261	7.52	2.06	550	-1.70
	Post-independence	291	7.81	1.90		
Inner Harmony	Pre-independence	261	8.85	1.50	549.89	2.61*
	Post-independence	291	8.49	1.70		
National Security	Pre-independence	261	9.01	1.38	549.34	1.64
	Post-independence	291	8.80	1.59		
Salvation	Pre-independence	261	9.33	1.16	543.60	2.36*
	Post-independence	291	9.07	1.44		
Social Recognition	Pre-independence	261	8.53	1.74	550	.511
	Post-independence	291	8.46	1.57		
Health	Pre-independence	261	8.89	1.61	550	-.006
	Post-independence	291	8.89	1.40		
A World Of	Pre-	261	8.18	1.89		

Peace	independence				550	-0.219
	Post-independence	291	8.21	1.70		
Self-Respect	Pre-independence	261	8.27	1.51		
	Post-independence	291	8.50	1.44	550	-1.85

*p<.05

Results in Table 2 shows there were significant difference in six out of 10 instrumental values. They were imaginative $t = -5.76$, $p < 0.05$, logical $t = -5.55$, $p < 0.05$, loving $t = -3.62$, $p < 0.05$, honest $t = -2.22$, $p < 0.05$, independent $t = 3.11$, $p < 0.05$, and polite $t = 4.92$, $p < 0.05$. The older group scored higher for loving, independent and polite whereas the younger generation scored significantly higher than the older generation for imaginative, logical and honest. It was also found that there was no difference between the two groups in terms of their values on capable, responsible, ambition, and courageous.

Table 2: T- test results of differences in instrumental values between pre-independence and post-independence

Malays						
	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Capable	Pre-independence	261	8.48	1.88	498.20	.528
	Post-independence	291	8.41	1.51		
Imaginative	Pre-independence	261	6.98	1.98	503.93	-5.76*
	Post-independence	291	7.88	1.63		
Logical	Pre-independence	261	7.16	1.99	499.17	-5.55*
	Post-independence	291	8.02	1.61		
Responsible	Pre-independence	261	8.61	1.50	549	-1.40
	Post-independence	291	8.78	1.35		
Ambition	Pre-independence	261	8.79	1.44	550	-0.10
	Post-independence	291	8.80	1.30		
Loving	Pre-independence	261	7.82	1.82	498.73	-3.62*
	Post-Independence	291	8.33	1.47		
Courageous	Pre-independence	261	8.43	1.58	549	.324

	Post-Independence	291	8.39	1.55		
Honest	Pre-independence	261	8.02	1.69	550	-2.22*
	Post-Independence	291	8.32	1.40		
Independent	Pre-independence	261	8.56	1.58	550	3.11*
	Post-independence	291	8.14	1.58		
Polite	Pre-independence	261	8.79	1.40	549.13	4.92*
	Post-independence	291	8.16	1.62		

*p<.05

Table 3 shows results of t-test on personality between the pre-independence and post-independence. The findings showed that there was significant difference of openness to experience personality trait among the pre and post-independence generations with $t = -4.22$, $p < 0.05$ and conscientiousness with $t = 2.19$, $p < 0.05$. The younger generation showed a higher mean of 43.44 compared to the older generation with the mean of 41.51 on openness. The reverse pattern was shown for conscientiousness with the younger generation obtaining a mean of 43.93 compared to the mean of 44.80 for the older generation. This results compliment the scores for values whereby the younger generation scored significantly higher than the old generation on honest, imaginative and logical. Being imaginative is a typical characteristic of an open person.

Table 3: T-test results on differences in personality between pre-independence and post-independence Malays

	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Neuroticism	Pre-independence	261	36.89	4.65	550	-0.630
	Post-Independence	291	37.15	4.35		
Extraversion	Pre-independence	261	39.63	5.02	525.04	0.258
	Post-Independence	291	39.42	4.46		
Openness	Pre-independence	261	41.41	5.58	550	-4.23*
	Post-independence	291	43.45	5.20		
Agreeableness	Pre-independence	261	37.16	4.34	550	0.341
	Post-independence	291	37.06	4.38		
Conscientiousness	Pre-independence	261	44.76	4.67	550	2.19*

Post- independence	291	43.89	4.62
-----------------------	-----	-------	------

*p<.05

The high score on conscientiousness for the old generation compliments the result on values whereby the older generation scored higher on independent, polite and loving. This shows that with experience, the older generation is socially matured (Roberts & Wood, 2006). However, there was no significant difference between the two generations in terms of the other three personality traits, extraversion, neuroticism and agreeableness. This results is somewhat expected because those in the older generation had gone through hardship in life during the pre-independence days and they must have learned from history that hard work pays.

The younger generation on the other hand scored higher on openness trait and in terms of values they seemed to value imaginative, logical, honesty more than the pre-independence group. Their personality has got to do with the present school system and the society which are more open and encourage open discussions. Parents are also generally more relax and broad minded while at the same time more open in their upbringing of their children. Even though Malaysians generally practice Asian culture, western culture in the form of western television programs are brought into the country via the television and other forms of mass media. On top of that the internet is another media where one learns about other cultures and other ways of life which then shapes the values and the personality of the younger generation. With the advancement of information technology and the internet, the younger generation through social media is very free to interact, exchange ideas and knowledge. Thus they are more open in their personality trait and they value imaginative, logical and honesty.

The results of this study shows that personality traits differ with age (Lucas & Donnellan, 2009; Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006) and age had significant relations with Big Five scores (Czerwon, Luttke and Werheid (2011). Further, experiences and exposure to changes in the environment shaped ones personality and values.

4. Conclusion

Results of this study showed that there were significant differences in both the terminal and instrumental values of the pre-independence and the post-independence generations. The pre-independence Malays seemed to value equality, inner harmony and salvation. On the other hand the post-independence Malays which made up of the younger generation scored higher on imaginative, logical and honesty. The pre-independence generation valued polite, independent and loving which reflect their social maturity. In terms of personality traits the two groups seemed to differ significantly; the post-independence scored higher on openness trait while the pre-independence scored higher on conscientiousness trait. The differences and the changes in the values and personality were explained by the rapid changes in the political, social and economic aspects of the country couple with the advancement in the information technology and the mass media which had brought some changes to the culture of the people in the country, hence shaped their values and personality.

References

- Chan, W., McCrae, R.R., Fruyt, F.D., Jussim, L., Lockenhoff, C.E; Pramila, V.S., (2012). Stereotypes of age differences in personality traits: universal and accurate? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103 (6), 1050-1066.
- Cileli, M. & Tezer, E. (1998). Life and value orientations of Turkish university students. *Adolescence, Spring*.
- Czerwan, B; Luttke, S. & Werheid, K. (2011). Age difference in valence judgements of emotional faces: the influence of personality traits and current mood. *Experimental Aging Research*, 37, 503-515.
- Kahle, L.R. (1983). Social values and social change: adaptation to social life in America, Praeger, New York, NY.
- Lehmann, R., Denissen, J.J.A., Allemand, M., & Penke, L. (2013). Age and gender differences in motivational manifestations of the Big Five from age 16 to 60. *Developmental Psychology*, 49 (2), 365-383.
- Lucas, R.E., & Donnellan, M.B. (2009). Age differences in personality: evidence from a nationally representative Australian sample. *Developmental Psychology*, 45, 1353-1363.
- Mourn, T. (1981). The role of values and life goals in quality of life. *Quality of Life: Problems of Assessment and Measurement*. Socio-Economic Studies: 5. Unesco.
- Roberts, B.W., & Mroczek, D. (2008). Personality traits change in adulthood. *Current Directions In Psychological*

Science, 17 (1), 31-35.

- Raths, L.E., Harmin,H., & Simon,S.B. (1966). Values and teaching: working with values in the classroom. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.
- Roberts, B.W., Walton,K.E., & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132, 1-25.
- Roberts, B.W., Woods, D. (2006). Personality development in the context of the Neo-socioanalytic model of personality. In Mroczek, D., & Little,T (Eds)., *Handbook of personality development* (pp11-39), Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The Nature of Human Values*.The Free Press, New York.
- Soto, C.J., Gosling, S.D., John, O.P., & Potter, J. (2011). Age differences in personality traits from 10 to 65: big five domains and facets in a large cross-sectional sample. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100 (2), 330-348.